



State of Wisconsin  
**Department of Health and Family Services**

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Jim Doyle, Governor  
Helene Nelson, Secretary

Date: February 3, 2004

To: Friends of Public Health

From: Helene Nelson, Secretary

Re: Public Health Restructuring Report

As you may recall, last fall I asked a DHFS staff team to develop recommendations about ways to improve the public health delivery system in Wisconsin with these goals:

- Streamline state government;
- Eliminate redundancy in state level public health functions;
- Increase resources available in communities for effective public health work;
- Improve the state's capacity to carry out the public health mission and achieve the goals set in *Healthiest Wisconsin 2010*
- Tap into new funding sources.

I have just received their report, which you can find on the Internet at [www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aboutDHFS/DPH/restructure/](http://www.dhfs.wisconsin.gov/aboutDHFS/DPH/restructure/). I appreciate the diligent and intelligent work of the staff team. I am very pleased by the way that they handled this tough assignment. They have prepared a comprehensive report with extensive background information and many ideas to achieve our public health goals. They honestly tackled some controversial ideas, and looked hard at ways to streamline state operations in the current fiscal climate.

I hope you will read the report and recommendations with interest. We need your feedback and participation in developing some options further, so we can reach the best possible decisions.

For example, the report suggests that more services should be delivered at the community level. We are eager to confer with local public health agencies and officials about these ideas, and the best ways to develop a strong local public health system across the entire state. If approved, these recommendations would be forwarded to the Governor and Legislature in the context of the state biennial budget, given the need for appropriate funding and possibly statutory changes.

I have made no decisions on any of these recommendations, except those related to the internal management structure of the Division of Public Health. At the same time the Public Health Restructuring Team was working, the state Department of Administration assigned our Department, like all state agencies, targets for added state operations funding reductions in the coming fiscal year. The budget adopted by the Legislature included unspecified cuts for the Executive branch to implement.

I want to let you know that, based in part on the work of the Task Force and also on other internal management deliberations within our agency, we have made decisions about streamlining the management structure of the Division of Public Health. We will be merging bureaus and making other changes that when put in final form will be shared. While the reorganization plan is subject to approval of the state Department of Administration, approval is likely given the Governor's direction to streamline agency management and achieve savings. While a substantial portion of the savings must be returned to the state, we will retain a portion for use in new program initiatives in cooperation with community public health partners.

The Public Health Restructuring Report creates an opportunity to expand the dialogue with public health partners about how best to accomplish mutual goals. If you have written comments or questions about the report, you may submit them to the following e-mail address: [DPHReview@dhfs.state.wi.us](mailto:DPHReview@dhfs.state.wi.us). Department managers will also meet with the Public Health Advisory Committee, WAHL DAB and various other committees and associations to discuss and receive input on the report. Finally, we will invite participation in workgroups to develop some ideas further.

Thank-you for your ongoing commitment to public health. We look forward to hearing from you.